NEW ENGLAND FISHERY MANAGEMENT Council

Multispecies (Skate) Committee

I. STATUS

A. Meetings: The PDT met on July 30 and August 27 to analyze Amendment 3 alternatives. The draft amendment document is due at the November Council meeting, with final amendment approval in February 2008.

II. COUNCIL ACTION

A. A progress report will be presented, but no Council action is required at this time.

III. INFORMATION

A. None.

Amendment 3 update

PDT progress

Timeline

- Scoping hearings – May 2007
- Approve framework of alternatives – June 2007
- Approve draft amendment and DEIS, specifications for alternatives and identify preferred alternatives – Nov. 2007
- Public hearings on draft amendment – Jan. 2007
- Approve final alternative – Feb. 2008
- Submit final document – Mar. 2008

Summary of alternatives

- Six alternatives plus status quo
- Overlay existing regulations
- 3 pairs with ACLs controlled by hard TACs
- 3 pairs of alternatives with ACLs and in-season triggers (no hard TAC)
- All with gear restricted areas or skate closed areas

Summary of alternatives

- Hard TAC and gear restricted areas
- Establish winter skate possession limit and raise minimum mesh size when targeting skates
- Reduce or establish skate possession limit for wing and whole skate fisheries; TAC set aside to encourage gear research; monitoring and framework adjustment program

Summary of alternatives

- Reduce or establish skate possession limit for wing and whole skate fisheries; spawning maximum size restriction; TAC set aside to encourage gear research; monitoring and framework adjustment program

PDT work in progress

- Specify ACL
  - Estimate change in mortality to produce a 10% average annual biomass increase
  - Estimate catch to produce a 10% increase, compared to a stable base period
  - Estimate discards and landings for FY2006, when FW42 rules were in effect to determine the amendment's mortality reduction goals

PDT work in progress

- Mortality objectives to rebuild biomass
  - 44% reduction for winter skate mortality
  - 58% reduction for thorny skate mortality
  - 27-38% reduction in winter skate catch, relative to 2005
  - Thorny skate catch reductions TBD
  - Catch reductions relative to 2006 TBD

PDT work in progress

- Specify ACL & mortality reductions
  - Population dynamic estimates are finished
  - Landings updates are finished
  - Awaiting discard estimates

PDT work in progress

- Specify ACL & mortality reductions
  - Wing landings increase 5% YOY after FW42
    - 17% higher during the Emergency Action rules
    - More targeting on MSP A and B DAS
    - Higher skate prices
  - Whole landings declined 15% YOY after FW42
    - 2:1 DAS counting
  - 2006 discarding TBD

PDT work in progress

- Possession limits
  - Evaluate effectiveness of various wing and whole skate over a range of possession limits
  - Results depend on discards in each fishery
  - Results depend on whether vessels take more trips or target other species to compensate
  - Needs considerable more work

PDT work in progress

- Minimum mesh
  - Observed size frequency of skate catch analyzed
  - Problems evaluating L_{50} in a mixed fishery
  - Plenty of data but needs considerable more work

PDT work in progress

- Seasonal spawning size limits
  - Accepted supporting science and recommendations
  - Limited data based on skates in the Gulf of Maine
  - Serious implementation and enforcement concerns
  - Qualitative evaluation

PDT work in progress

- Gear restricted areas
  - Five semi-annual GRAs identified based on detailed analysis of sea sampling and survey data
  - Preliminary evaluation with a 2-bin model
    - Model modified to apply to regions and incorporate discard mortality
  - Work finished, pending review
  - Closed Area Model better suited to evaluate effects, but is unavailable for use

Closed area analysis

- Two bin model
  - Effort shift is unconstrained by other regulations and economics
  - Accounts for existing area closures
  - Assumes catch changes by differences inside and outside of closures
  - Underestimates mortality and economic effects
- Closed area model
  - Predicts effort shifts that maximize profit
  - Accounts for DAS regulations, possession limits, and economics
  - More realistic
  - Integrates effects of management measures

PDT work in progress

- Update EIS
  - Data intensive
  - Considerable more work needed

To be continued . . .

- Considerable work remains to be done, timeline is now optimistic
- Complicated effects due to interactions with other fisheries and layered regulations
- Integrated biological analysis
- Economic and social analysis
- Closed Area Model (CAM) would provide more accurate predictions
- 2-bin model could be modified, but it would become more like the CAM